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ABSTRACT

This brief guide explains the use of testing accommodations for students with a disability participating in state or district educational assessments under federal and Florida state law. These include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Florida Administrative Code. Planning guidelines match testing accommodations with instructional accommodations. Guidelines for providing accommodations include suggestions for modifying the setting (e.g., taking the test in a distraction-free setting), the scheduling (breaking up a test into several periods within one school day), responding (use of oral, signed, word processed, or Braille responses), and presentation format (use of mechanical devices, or revised formats including enlarged-print, Braille, and sign language). (DB)

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TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Introduction

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1997, requires a statement of individual accommodations needed for the student to participate in state or district assessment of student progress. Students who qualify as a student with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are also eligible for test accommodations.

Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), provides the basis for accommodations to Florida's statewide assessment system for students with disabilities. Information about allowable accommodations is provided in the test administrator's manual for each of the statewide assessments. This paper provides additional information about test accommodations for consideration by persons administering state or district assessment programs.

Planning for Testing of Students with Disabilities

The following points should guide district and school personnel in providing for accommodations for students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs:

Test coordinators in each school district should assure that information on accommodations for students with disabilities is shared with all school-level personnel administering state or district assessment programs.

School-level personnel should provide opportunities for persons administering assessments to review and discuss appropriate accommodations and plan the assessment administration process for students with disabilities.

Students should receive instruction in testing procedures and be provided with opportunities to practice test-taking strategies.

The accommodations used for an individual student during testing should match accommodations used in instruction, without invalidating the purpose of the assessment.

Test accommodations must be indicated on the student's individual educational plan (IEP) or the 504 plan.

Providing Accommodations

Consideration must be given to providing accommodations that will allow the student with a disability to demonstrate skill and knowledge without jeopardizing the quality of the testing process. Students must have an IEP or 504 plan to be considered for testing accommodations.

Each student is unique and each may require different accommodations. Even students with the same disability may require quite different accommodations. The student's IEP or 504 plan should address the accommodations that are regularly provided for classroom activities and assessment and should guide decisions on accommodations for specific test situations. However, allowable accommodations for statewide tests are limited to those listed in the test administration manuals.

Accommodations that are allowable for students with disabilities generally are described in five different categories. These categories are defined with examples below:

SETTING:
Students may take the test individually or in a small group setting under a proctor's supervision. Students who are easily distracted or require close monitoring may take a test in a setting that is distraction-free (e.g., in a study carrel or a separate room). Some students may require a flexible setting to accommodate special lighting, furniture, equipment, or acoustic needs. Other students may need calming background music, freedom to move about as needed, or a space that is familiar and comfortable for them. The special education teacher may need to proctor a test administration so that these accommodations can be provided.

SCHEDULING:
Students may take a session of the test during several brief periods within one school day; however, a session of the test must be completed within one school day.

Students who tire easily may need more frequent or extended rest breaks. Some students are better able to give their best

performance at certain times of the day and may need to be tested at a different time of day than when the test is scheduled.

Students may be provided additional time; however, a session of the test must be completed within one school day. Some students may need extended time to complete the testing process. However, extended time should not be provided automatically. Decisions to extend time should be based on the student's demonstrated performance on similar tasks in the instructional setting. Test administrators should monitor the extended time accommodation to assure that students are attending to the testing situation.

If a district uses a timed test for student achievement, decisions will have to be made about including students who typically need extended time. If extended time is used, the testing situation becomes a nonvalid administration, and results should be reported individually with indication of the modifications used.

RESPONDING:
Students may provide an oral response, a signed response, a response on a word processor, or a response on a Braille writer. If an oral response is given by the student, the proctor must ask the student to indicate the punctuation and spell uncommon words. Oral responses and signed responses must be transcribed by a proctor into the test book assigned to the student. Student responses must not be edited when transcribed. This accommodation may require a one-on-one test administration in order to avoid distracting other students.

PRESENTATION:
Students may use mechanical aids such as a magnifying device, a pointer, a noncalibrated rule or template, or other similar devices to assist in maintaining visual attention to the test book or answer book. Flexible presentation means that students may need to have directions read to them or summarized for them. Re-reading directions may be necessary. Some language in directions may need to be simplified or the student may need to restate the directions in his/her own words. Proctors may answer student questions about any test directions. Test item language may not be reworded, and proctors may not answer student questions about the wording of test questions or interpret test questions for students. Reading items and passages designed to test reading skills may not be read to students. Simple math questions should be read to the student in their entirety; more complex, multiple-step math questions may be read one part at a time. Students may need to use magnifiers, auditory amplification devices, or other devices typically used in classroom instruction.

Flexible presentation includes the use of revised formats. Revised formats include:

Print Versions. Students may be tested with enlarged-print materials or with regular-print materials enlarged through mechanical or electronic means.

Braille Versions. Students may be tested with materials that have been transferred to Braille code, or tested by using devices that permit optical-to-tactile transformations.

Auditory and Sign Language Presentations. The test administrator may sign, provide oral interpretations of, or read to students general directions, writing prompts, and the mathematics items. Reading items and passages designed to test reading skills *must be read by the student using visual or tactual means.*

Special Note on Section 504 Implications

To assure that all qualified students with disabilities in our public education system are provided necessary related aids, services, or accommodations during the administration of a test, districts will ensure that students with disabilities who are not currently in any special education program or who do not have a current IEP be considered for and, if appropriate, provided test accommodations listed in this document. Testing accommodations for these students must be listed on the student's 504 plan. Procedures for qualifying students as disabled under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are provided in the document: *Meeting the Needs of Students: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* available from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, 614 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400.

For more information on testing accommodations contact:

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